

U.S. Embassy Manila Voting Announcement

October 12, 2010

THE EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES IS TRANSMITTING THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION THROUGH THE EMBASSY WARDEN SYSTEM AS A PUBLIC SERVICE TO AMERICAN CITIZENS IN THE PHILIPPINES. PLEASE DISSEMINATE THIS MESSAGE TO ALL U.S. CITIZENS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION OR NEIGHBORHOOD. THANK YOU.

Voting Overseas

On October 28, 2009, Congress enacted the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act. This legislation amends existing laws regarding overseas voting in federal elections, and should make voting easier for overseas Americans.

New Procedures for 2010 Elections

Beginning with the November 2010 general election, and for all subsequent general, special, and primary elections, states will be required to mail out ballots at least 45 days prior to an election for a federal office. This requirement may cause some states to select earlier primary dates in order to comply with the 45 day mailing deadline, or to request waivers due to special circumstances.

In addition to mailing ballots to overseas voters, the states will be required, at the voter's request, to provide registration forms, absentee ballot request forms, and blank ballots via fax or email. However, each state's laws determine whether ballot requests or voted ballots can be returned via fax or email. The new law prohibits states from rejecting marked ballots based on notarization, paper size, or paper weight requirements. The witnessing requirements of individual states remain in place.

Overseas Absentee Ballot Requests

Effective immediately, states will no longer be required by federal law to continue to mail election materials to overseas addresses for two complete general election cycles on the basis of a single ballot request. It will now be up to each state to determine how long to continue to send out election materials before requiring overseas voters to submit new ballot requests. This change, sought by local election officials, should greatly decrease the volume of voting materials sent abroad to addresses where Americans no longer reside.

State Department Recommendations

In light of these changes, the Department of State recommends that all U.S. voters residing abroad request absentee ballots from their local election officials at the start of each calendar year, and whenever there is a change of address, change of e-mail address, or change of name, by completing and sending in a Federal Post Card Application

(FPCA). To locate information on your specific state's requirements, and to obtain an online version of the FPCA, please visit <http://www.fvap.gov/FPCA/>.

The Department of State strongly encourages all U.S. overseas voters to provide email addresses or fax numbers in Item 6 on their FPCAs to enable local election officials to transmit election materials in the fastest manner available, which should then allow sufficient time for the return of voted ballots. For information regarding your specific state, please visit <http://www.fvap.gov/FPCA/>.

Emergency Ballots

The Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot (FWAB) serves as an emergency ballot for the November general elections for federal offices, although some states also permit its use for elections for state and local offices. Beginning in January 2011, the new law allows use of the FWAB for primary, special, and runoff elections for federal offices. Voters who request an absentee ballot in advance of their state's ballot request deadline, but who fail to receive an official ballot from local election officials in time to vote, should complete the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot and send it back to local election officials in time for it to be counted. An online version of the FWAB, together with state-specific instructions for its use, is available at <http://www.fvap.gov/shortcuts/getfwab.html>.

Election Materials Received at the U.S. Embassy Manila

U.S. Embassy Manila will forward completed election materials, including ballots, to local election officials. The mail will be date stamped as received by the post office upon arrival at the embassy. No courier service will be used and the estimated delivery time of the mail to the local election officials is five (5) business days. Accordingly, your completed election materials should arrive to the embassy no later than October 26, 2010.

Questions?

The Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) website, <http://www.fvap.gov/>, provides current information for uniformed service members and their families as well as U.S. citizens living outside of the U.S. Please also see the list of frequently asked questions with answers at <http://www.fvap.gov/faq.html>.

Refer to the U.S. Embassy Manila's website for updated voting information and further announcements at <http://manila.usembassy.gov/wwwaha012.html>.

The Voting Assistance Officer at the U.S. Embassy Manila is also always available to answer questions about absentee voting. To contact the Voting Assistance Officer, call (63-2) 301-2246 or 2567 or send an e-mail to ACSIInfoManila@state.gov.